

Serial Number 10/054,867

REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of original claim 7 (as well as ~~claims 5 and 6 from which claim 7 depended~~), and claim 8 has been re-written in independent form to include the subject matter of original claim 1.

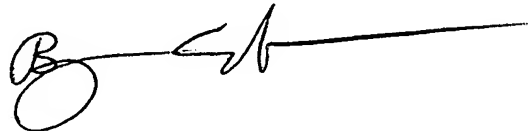
Claims 7 and 8 were indicated in item VI on page 4 of the final Office Action as being directed to allowable subject matter. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that amended claims 1 and 8, as well as claims 2, 4, 16, and 17 which depend therefrom, are clearly allowable. New claims 16 and 17 are identical to original claims 2 and 4, except that they depend from claim 8 rather than claim 1.

The objection to claim 9 and the rejections based on prior art have been rendered moot by the above-listed amendments. Claims 11-14 have already been allowed, as indicated in item V on page 4 of the Official Action.

Having thus overcome each of the rejections made in the Official Action, withdrawal of the rejections and expedited passage of the application to issue is requested.

Respectfully submitted, -

BACON & THOMAS, PLLC



Date: January 9, 2004

By: BENJAMIN E. URCIA
Registration No. 33,805

BACON & THOMAS, PLLC
625 Slaters Lane, 4th Floor
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
Telephone: (703) 683-0500

NWUS\Producer\ben\Pending A...10\VFAN0054867a02.wpd